7: Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Amatenango del Valle

The me'iltatil is the core institution preserving cultural continuity in the community. The exercise of authority and social control depended on a system of checks and balances in which the ancestors watched over the community, the judges watched over the curers to see that they did not abuse their power, and the curers watched over their side of the dual division to see that no witches or evil spirits caused harm. The validation of power is based on the kinship model of age-authority. The recruitment and functions of each of the three manifestations of this ancestral authority will be discussed in the following chapters on life crisis rituals, curing, and civil government.

The Household and Family

The household unit is a crystallization at a given point in time of consanguineously and affinally related people within a wider kinship matrix. It is the most important structural unit providing for economic cooperation, socialization of the young, and care and sustenance of the aged. It provides the setting and the personnel for the transmission of traditional prayers and ritual procedures of the civil and religious hierarchy. The composition of the unit is constantly changing due to internal changes in the life cycles of its members as well as changes in the wider kinship matrix. The decisions made in response to these changes reveal both traditionally established adjustments to life crises and adaptations to social changes originating outside the family. The kinds of choices made in residence after marriage as well as in inheritance and succession to leadership in the household do not always conform to the cultural formulae for handling them. The exigencies of space, time, economic, and social considerations may outweigh the ideological considerations of what ought to be done.

The formula for the developmental cycle of the household is the following: when a man marries, he lives with his bride's family for one year, working in her father's fields. He then returns to his father's household to live and work with him until his father is too old to manage the work in the field. The father then gives equal shares of his land and animals to each of his children, both male and female. The youngest child, or the last one to get married, remains in the parental house, taking care of the aged

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Amatenango del Valle

been made, there is no recourse but to kill the man since he may retaliate by killing his accuser (this occurred in two of the cases noted in Table 29).

Conflict between generations in the role sets father/son and father/son-in-law stems from delay in carrying out role responsibilities. Fathers are expected to provide the money for the costs of betrothal, and to give their children shares of the patrimony including both land and livestock. The scheduling of when this should occur is often a matter of dispute, resulting in at least two cases of homicide in the period analyzed.

New economic enterprises have exacerbated the tensions rising from envy. Foster (1965) has suggested that envy stems from the notion of the "limited good," requiring the strategy of a "zero sum game" (Bennet 1966). The fact that the new wealth is evidence of new opportunities, not a subtraction from a given resource supply, has not entered the cognitive awareness of the people. The prospering leaders of these enterprises feel themselves to be particularly vulnerable to the envy of others and thus to the charge of witchcraft. There have been several open attacks on new leaders accused as witches; the leader of the truck cooperative, for example, was murdered in 1966. Six men have been killed as cattle thieves in the past ten years.

The economic roles created with the introduction of new enterprises have not been integrated in the traditional pattern of recruitment and control. In the association of cattle breeders, leadership tends to be based on the size of the herd; in the case of the truck cooperative, amount of capital invested and entrepreneurial skills have determined the leadership of the enterprise, while driving skill and ability to get along in the Ladino world has been the basis for choice of drivers. Such achievement principles as the basis for recruitment into these envied positions are not accepted in the same way that age and passage through a hierarchy of posts validated higher positions in the old hierarchies. The conspicuous expenditure of wealth in the more expensive posts in the religious hierarchy has also failed to lessen hostility aroused by the increasing disparity in wealth, and in fact those who have served as alférez have been even more subject to witchcraft aroused by envy.

593 loses his labor and some of its land holdings, while if a daughter
592 leaves, the loss of labor is marginal, there is no loss of land,
464 and her removal is not a drain on the resources of the household,
562 nor does it upset its basic economy.
423

591 The multiple bonds between a father and a son over the
593 patrimonial land of the family, the products of their joint ef-
182 fort, and their common responsibility for setting up the standard of living for the homestead, all foster patrilocality.

423 A young man could, today, obtain land without his father's
425 direct help. He cannot obtain irrigated land (because it is ex-
592 tremely scarce, and privately "owned" by the household heads),
621 but he could obtain land in the communal lands of the village.
[593] This, of course, is not the better land, being temporal and far away from the village. Although the temporal land close to town is not privately owned, it is "earmarked" for use by the heads of each household. That is, the communal lands are distributed to households, not by titles of ownership, but by usufruct rights. Even if he decides to take such a step, he needs (1) the approval of the Ayuntamiento which oversees the distribution of usufruct rights for the community as a whole, and (2) the recruitment of other men to help him clean and fence the parcel.

621 Neither of the two alternatives is easy to carry out in
593 practice. First, if the Ayuntamiento grants land to a man against
423 his father's will, this creates a problem of jurisdiction between
425 the jural rights of the household head and the administrative
578 rights of the Ayuntamiento. We could not predict what consequences such a case would have, because we have no evidence that it has ever occurred (of course, this is based on the case

593 578 histories collected during the field work season, and it well [621] could be that a case was missed). Second, if he wants to obtain [423] help from other men, they risk antagonizing, with their willing- [476] ness to cooperate, the head of the household in which the young man is residing, and they also risk the concommitant sanctions.

423 The young man could also obtain land without his father's •425 help by leaving the community to work for wages and saving enough 464 money to buy land. Although the selling of parcels is not a 166 [593] common practice in Aguacatenango, the idea of land being a commodity that can be bought and sold has been introduced, and some few household heads, in cases of emergency, are willing to sell. Of course, leaving the community to work for wages means voluntary exile for a man and alienation from relatives, friends and the cultural milieu. Also, men insist that it is profitable to work for wages only if one does it for short periods of time and keeps milpa simultaneously. Wage work alone is not enough to buy corn and the other necessities to meet the requirements of the customary standard of living.

593 On the other Hand, a man breaking away from his home and 621 refusing to accept his father's authority becomes a deviant, and 156 antagonizes not only his family, but the community.

593 Although it is possible, theoretically, to become eco- 592 nomically independent of one's father against his will, in fact 156 a man can only set up his own household in compliance with the ethical principles and moral conventions of his culture. Therefore, he is only permitted to form his own domestic group when he has demonstrated that he has reached the stage of social maturity which allows him to do so.